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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Local Events Marking National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month  
Focus on Encouragement and Advocacy**

MONTGOMERY — Many people are familiar with 12 step recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and others. The common threads that run through these wonderful recovery support groups are the 12 step program elements and the fact that all participants are “anonymous.” **A different type of organization has emerged in recent years that stress “advocacy” and “recovery”.** These new advocacy groups focus on public forum issues that are important to the addiction recovery community. Advocates openly lobby for more services for treatment of substance use disorders and promote more respect for people experiencing recovery. By advocating for more services and educating the public about substance use disorders these groups help reduce stigma and encourage recovery.

In Alabama several of these groups are combining their efforts to support National Alcohol & Drug Addiction Recovery Month (September) through two events planned this weekend. The first is a **Rally for Recovery Day at the Park**. Hundreds are expected to gather at Caldwell Park in Birmingham, Alabama on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. The opening session will provide information about Alabama Voices for Recovery, a statewide advocacy group working to eliminate barriers to recovery and highlight a proclamation from Governor Riley proclaiming September as Recovery Month in Alabama. The second event is the **Recovery Sunday Celebration** which will also draw hundreds at the Freewill Missionary Baptist Church in Montgomery on Sunday, September 21, from 11 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Guest speaker Chaplain Tony Hall will share a special message, and the Choir and Praise Team from the Human Resource Development Institute, Inc. in Thomasville and HRDI KADETS will also be on hand to make special performances. The Choir and Praise Team are all men from one of the department's Certified Adult Intensive Outpatient Programs and the KADETS are the Institute's youth choir. Everyone in the general public is invited to both events!

In addition, several individuals in recovery will share their stories and spread the message of hope at both events. According to Kent Hunt, Associate Commissioner for Substance Abuse with the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation, “All Recovery Month activities are designed to increase awareness that recovery from substance use disorders is not only possible, but is being enjoyed by thousands of Alabamians every day. Hearing success stories can only encourage individuals and families who are currently suffering that a healthier, happier life is available. It's all about encouragement.”

Almost 25,000 Alabama citizens receive services through publicly funded addiction treatment programs every year. National studies have projected that over 325,000 citizens could (and perhaps should) benefit from treatment each year in Alabama. On any given day there are over 600 people who have had an assessment, need treatment and are waiting for a slot in existing programs in the state. A National Center on Addiction at Columbia University (CASA) study projected that Alabama taxpayers pay over one billion each year in costs that are directly related to substance abuse. These costs could be largely reduced by placing funds in prevention and treatment rather than services that picks up the pieces after a

crime has been committed or a child placed in foster care. Advocacy groups such as Alabama Voices for Recovery point out these and other facts to policy makers and the public. The Rally for Recovery this Saturday is one way for their voices to be heard.

For more information about these and other Recovery Month events, please contact Beverly Johnson in the department's Substance Abuse Services Division. She can be reached on her cell at 334-549-5548 or at the department at 334-353-4362. More information about National Recovery Month can be found by visiting <http://www.recoverymonth.gov/>.

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